



Geo Week 2019 in Canberra

The name of our capital city Canberra is based on the word “*Kambera*” of the Ngunnawal people, the traditional custodians of the land where our capital resides, which is thought to mean “a meeting place”. In early November, Canberra was truly a meeting place, hosting the GEO Week 2019 and the 16th GEO Ministerial Summit attended by 105 Member governments, business leaders, heads of international non-for-profit organisations and passionate GEO experts.

“GEO” is derived from the Greek word γη, meaning "earth". The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is an intergovernmental partnership of 105 member governments, 127 international organisations and thousands of passionate individuals and businesses. The GEO community uses data about our planet to drive sustained and inclusive economic growth.

GEO Week provides a unique forum where governments, businesses, the research community, non-for-profit organisations and other communities concerned with the well-being of our planet come together to share views, mature the overall vision for the GEO future, cooperate on issues and create solutions.



Building on the Mexico City Declaration from 2015, the GEO Week 2019 focused on the GEO Strategic Plan aiming to bring the GEO communities together in order to grow the understanding and importance of Earth Observations. Most of the business decisions today need to carefully consider how they impact the changes of “GEO”, our planet.



Earth Observations are measurements of our planet and how it is changing: its land, atmosphere and oceans, its cities, towns and villages. Earth Observation data is collected by satellites, aircraft, ships and observatories on the ground.

Earth Observation data is a key ingredient used to understand these changes and improve our relationship with our environment, borrowed from our children. GEO Week 2019 and the GEO highlighted the contributions of Earth Observations to assist us understand our environment, minimise the impact and ensure delivering massive Returns on Investment to the World economies and communities.

The GEO community has realigned with recognised key strategic priorities and is now structured for action. The discussion on implementing global agenda has matured, both at a global level within formal UN institutions, as well as at a national and community level.



GEO Week gathered together ministers interested in improving the use of Earth Observation data and technology for a sustained economic development, representatives of GEO Member Governments and Participating Organisations interested in advancing GEO's mission, contributors to GEO Work Programme initiatives and activities interested in advancing GEO's mission, as well as industry leaders from the technology, space and spatial sectors, including Esri.

International organisations interested in advancing the availability and use of Earth observations in support of their mission.

Scientists and technical experts interested in learning and sharing their knowledge to support sustainable development.



Participants discussed how the integration of Earth Observation data into our digital economies can drive progress on the global policy frameworks:

- United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Paris Climate Agreement, and
- Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The UN-lead Plenary Sessions included the following topics:

- Action on Climate Change
- Action on Disaster Risk Reduction
- Action on Sustainable Development
- Broadening the Impact of Earth Observation and GEO
- Implementing a Results-Oriented Global Earth Observation System of Systems.

Unlike any other similar international summit, it was refreshing to see the political agenda and issues being parked and focus of participants streamlined to addressing real issues, which do not have boundaries in territorial, political and/or religion terms.

GEO Week 2019 included a dedicated Industry Track, supported by the world's leading technology, space and geospatial organisations that came together to demonstrate their Earth Observation-enabled digital products and services, promoting their capabilities and enabling networking and forming new partnerships.



Lead by the Australian Space Agency, with support Australia's national science and technology agency CSIRO, the Industry Track will include the GEO Week Exhibition, networking events, pitch sessions and the facilitation of bilateral meetings.

One of the key outcomes of GEO Week 2019 was the Canberra Declaration, which is calling for Governments around the globe to provide official development assistance programs to increase

support for Earth Observations (EO), highlighting the value of open EO data in support of the countries in development.

Vladimir Videnovic
IIM National President
November 2019